

Board of Visitors  
Virginia School for the Deaf and blind  
Minutes  
December 22, 2009

**Call to Order**--Board Chairman Emmett Hanger called the meeting to Order.

Members Present: Delegate Matt Lohr; Nancy Armstrong, VSDB Superintendent; Jane McNeal, Chesterfield County; Alice Frick, retired teacher of the deaf department; Ralph Shelman, from Hampton; John Pleasants, alumni representative for the blind department; Virgil Cook, VSDB graduate, retired English professor from Virginia Tech, and Board secretary

**Approval of October 29, 2009, Minutes.**--John Pleasants moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes. The motion passed. John Pleasants moved that the minutes be approved as distributed. The motion passed.

**Adoption of Agenda**--Senator Hanger moved officer reports down to unfinished business. He suggested waiting to appoint the executive committee until the governor fills the vacancies on the Board.

**Committee Reports**

**Superintendent Nancy Armstrong.** Enrollment has remained steady at 123. The school closed last Thursday because of the threat of bad weather. So far we have lost two instructional days. If we miss too many, we may need to lengthen the school day. Workers are replacing the porch and steps on Main Hall. Still, no cornerstone has been located. The renovation is on schedule. Still, there has been some delay with the Stuart renovation because of late delivery of windows and other items. The maintenance building is complete. The ground breaking for the new academic building is scheduled for January 14, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. We are continuing to design plans for the elementary school in Peery.

Virgil Cook asked if there would be any architectural changes that would alter the appearance of the front of Main Hall. Dr. Armstrong indicated that there will be changes, which have been approved. Brick pavers will be used for the walks in front. The steps will be in stone. There will also be lighting along the ground.

**Nathan McLamb, Human Resources Director**--We have 58 faculty authorizations with 57 filled. We have 122.5 staff positions with 118.5 filled. There are 180.5 total positions with 175.5 filled for a rate of 97%. Three resignations in January will drop the rate to 95.5%. We have 52 of 56 wage staff positions filled for a rate of 93%. There was a 6% turnover of personnel in 2009. There is usually about an 11% turnover, usually at the end of the year. The two vacancies on the safety staff are wage personnel.

**Janice Rankin, Director of Operations**--We have a 10% budget cut for 2010. We are 5% over, so we will have to find more savings. There will be a \$1.5 million cut for 2011. Our payroll processing will be done in Richmond as of January 1, adding \$31,000 or so to our cost. Bids on Phase Two of correcting safety hazards came in over budget, so we may have to rebid.

**Conflict of Interest**--Samantha Vanterpool Attorney General's office. The conflict of Interest laws are designed to prevent financial gain

from one's position. The act provides only legal standards. She then showed an educational video on conflict of interest.

### ***Special Orders***

**Bylaws Revision**—The Board considered the following revisions to the bylaws. The Board directed that, with help from Samantha Vanterpool, Secretary Virgil Cook should make revision to the preamble of Article I.

The preamble to article I now res as follows:

### **ARTICLE I: PURPOSE**

In 2009, the Virginia General Assembly established the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind as a **separate** agency in the executive branch of state government under the name of the "Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind." The school is to be governed by the Board of Visitors of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind" (Board). The purpose of the Board is to govern the educational programs and services to deaf, blind, and multi-disabled students enrolled at the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind.

Under Article VI, Section B, Standing Committees, second paragraph, Change "Rector" to "Chairman."

Under Section C, Standing Committees, first paragraph, change "University" to "School."

JOHN PLEASANTS moved adoption with changes. The motion passed.

**Proposed Legislation**—Senator Hanger and Nancy Armstrong. There needs to be change under Section 22.1-348. Parents may enroll students based on educational requirements.

The school will serve ages from birth to 21 instead of from two to twenty-one. We would add that parents may choose to enroll their children upon meeting criteria set by VSDB and the Department of Education. Senator Hanger and Delegate Lohr will go forward with "birth to twenty-one," but they will back off if necessary. John Pleasants stressed the importance of emphasizing the fact that parents may choose. Senator Hanger suggested that we draft a letter to the Secretary of Education indicating that the Department of Education must send out letters to parents of blind and deaf children informing them of the availability of VSDB as an alternative to a public school. Dr. Armstrong said that the letter should be sent out in the fall, at the beginning of the school year. JOHN PLEASANTS moved that the proposals go forward. The motion passed.

**ITT Restrictions**—The School should be exempted from the requirement that VITA purchase technology for the school. JOHN PLEASANTS moved that this proposal be sent forward. The motion passed.

**Payroll Processing**--Senator Hanger pointed to the school's wish for a budgetary action to shift payroll processing back to the school. John Pleasants Moved that the proposal go forth. The motion passed.

**Publicity for VSDB**—Nancy Armstrong. John's motion that a letter notifying parents of the availability of the school be sent out will accomplish what the school desires.

#### ***Unfinished business***

**Board Vacancies**--Senator Hanger informed the Board that one appointee had chosen not to serve. Therefore, the governor--probably Governor McDonnell will appoint a replacement. Also, another legislator needs to be appointed. So far, no one from Tidewater is willing to serve.

#### ***New Business***

**Technology**—Karen Simpson. E-rate funding gives a discount on technology services such as Internet access. Currently, we don't own our infrastructure. The big push is professional development. E-rate money is Federal money from taxes on communications bills. We need to be able to provide access to networks for the special equipment (i.e., a PC with speech and/or Braille output). Ralph Shellman moved that the Board revisit the issue at the next meeting. The motion passed.

Virgil Cook asked what constitutes public notice. Nancy Armstrong indicated that the school advertised on its Website, in the *Staunton News Leader*, and at the state office in Staunton. Senator Hanger noted that VITA, who maintains a calendar, must also be notified. The failure to notify VITA was the reason for the delay of the October meeting. Senator Hanger proposed that we consider expanding notice at the next meeting.

Ralph Shellman raised the issue of minorities/diversity on the staff. Nathan McLamb indicated that the school posts notice of available positions in local areas with minority populations. Ralph Shellman suggested posting openings with predominantly black colleges and universities. Graduates might be more interested in working here because they probably haven't yet established homes in a particular area.

**Foundation Update**—Nancy Armstrong. We have been in touch with one promising lawyer for working with the transfer of the foundation control from the Department of Education and constituting a foundation Board.

**Public Comment**--Rachel Babister, President of the Virginia Association of the Deaf and a retired principal for the deaf department spoke in favor of returning to the policy of serving children from birth to 21. The Virginia Association of the Deaf will help work to pass the legislation.

Adjournment—The meeting was adjourned at 1:24.

Respectfully submitted: Virgil A. Cook, Secretary.